

The Library Assistant:

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JANUARY MEETING.—ANNOUNCEMENT.

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, January 17th**, and it is perhaps only necessary to remind members that it will be held at West Ham to ensure a large attendance. On this occasion we shall meet at the **Canning Town Library**, Barking Road, E., by invitation of Mr. S. A. Hatcher, Librarian. Light refreshments will be served at 6.30, and papers on two most interesting subjects will be read and discussed, viz. :—

7.30. **Junior paper:** **Ernest J. Bell**, Fulham. "Newsrooms: their requirements and service."

8.15. **Senior paper:** **Charles F. Newcombe**, Camberwell. "Library lectures and Extension work."

Trains from Liverpool Street, Fenchurch Street, Woolwich, and stations on the North London Line via Victoria Park or Bow to Canning Town Station (G.E.R.); or by District Railway (East Ham train) to Plaistow Station, thence by electric car.

Liverpool Street, 5.46, 6.40.

Fenchurch Street, 6.2, 6.30, 6.57.

Woolwich, 6.0, 6.15, 6.50, 7.0.

There is a good service of omnibuses from Poplar Station (fare 1d.), and electric cars from East Ham pass the Library.

DECEMBER MEETING.

The third meeting of the Session was held at the Central Library, Hornsey, N., on Wednesday evening, December 6th, by kind invitation of Thomas Johnston, Esq., Chief Librarian, who also occupied the Chair throughout the evening. There was again a large attendance of members and friends. Prior to the meeting light refreshments, for which the members were indebted to Mr. Johnston, were served, and full advantage was also taken of the opportunity afforded for inspecting the Library.

The first paper was as follows:—

STOCK-TAKING METHODS.

By ARCHIBALD F. HATCHER, West Ham Public Libraries.

The subject with which I propose to deal, viz., Stock-taking Methods, is one which, whilst being a serious problem to many librarians, has not received much attention generally. After searching through the files of the professional journals, both English and American, I have only been able to find two references to this subject; one, in "The Library Association Record," 1900, part 2, where there is an extract from the "Sheffield Daily Telegraph" giving a more or less accurate description of what stock-taking in a public library appears to outsiders. The other, in "The Library," vol. 2, N.S., 1901, is a description of the method adopted at the St. Louis (U.S.A.) Public Library. Not only has this subject been

neglected by the professional journals, but I am unable to find any reference to it in any of the books dealing with public libraries and librarianship.

The first question to be decided is: Shall the library be closed for a definite period for stock-taking, or shall the work be carried on whilst the library is open to the public? Those who favour closing argue that—

The library cannot be properly checked whilst the books are constantly being changed.

Each book should be examined for repairs, etc., and this cannot be satisfactorily accomplished under such circumstances.

When one class is finished there is no danger of the books being misplaced if the library is closed, thus saving much consequent searching.

Stock-taking is finished in a few days if the library is closed, instead of spreading over some months.

As the library is closed during the slack season (usually during July or August) very little inconvenience to borrowers will result.

The chief argument against closing appears to be that borrowers, being deprived of the use of the library, lose their connection and stay away for some time. This objection can be met, if it is decided not to call in the books, by letting any borrower who so wishes take two books just before stock-taking.

Another question is: If the library is closed shall the books be called in? The principal reason in favour appears to be that all books should be thoroughly examined, and this cannot be done satisfactorily unless the library is closed. Against this it is argued that it is not necessary to call in the books for examination as a mark can be inserted in the indicator ledger or charging pocket to have such books as are out during stock-taking stopped and examined (on return), so that a complete turn-over may be effected, and that any calling in of books deprives the borrowers of the use of the libraries for so long as they are closed.

Of course the necessity for closing and calling in the books is much greater in such places as the east end of London than in a quiet residential suburb; and for the same reason there is less necessity for closing a newly opened building than one which has been open some years. Personally I am in favour of closing the library and calling in all books (or if not all books at least Fiction) as from personal observation I think the majority of those who use the library during the slack season and who object to the closing are those who would have the library open every day, Sundays and Bank Holidays included, and then occasionally want to change their books two or three times a day. If it is not thought advisable to close the library every year, I would suggest as a compromise that it be closed every second, third, or fifth year.

I will now proceed to describe the various methods, and will deal first with the library which is closed and the books called in.

About six weeks before the time on which it is decided to close notices should be exhibited giving particulars as to the return of books by the specified time and the penalty incurred for not doing so. This should also be printed in the rules and regulations. It is desirable that handbills giving such details should be printed and inserted in books as issued, and in any overdue notices. A penalty for delay should be stated, as that has more force than a mere requisition for the return of the book. In some cases the amount of fine stated is sixpence per day, but this is rarely, if ever, enforced. When the return is deliberately delayed a fine of one penny per day, or the suspension of the ticket, will probably meet the case. If this method is adopted there will not be many books out when stock-taking is to be commenced; and if possible books sent to the binders should be completed and returned to the library before stock-taking, as also should all books at the Sanitary Office. When all books have been returned they must be placed in their position on the shelves.

If the shelf arrangement is only a rough or broad classification and an indicator is in use, it will only be necessary for an assistant at the shelves to call the numbers of the books to an assistant at the indicator, who checks the same, particular attention being paid to works of more than one volume to see that all volumes are on the shelf. The assistant at the indicator will have sheets of paper on which to enter the numbers of any books not on the shelves, and marked on the indicator for binding, repairs, replace, etc. The numbers of any books which are not on the shelves, and have no such mark, should also be noted either by placing the ledgers in a tray or by entering the numbers on a sheet. If a shelf catalogue is in use it should be before the assistant at the indicator, so that he may see at a glance what numbers have been left vacant for additions. After the indicator has been checked, a search must be made through the Binding Book, Withdrawals Book, and among the books out for repairs and replacement, and each book as accounted for should be ticked off and marked on the indicator accordingly.

With a library which is similarly classified and has a card or pocket charging system it will be necessary to have a shelf register or catalogue. This should have columns for the shelf number, accession number, number of volumes, and several narrow columns for the purpose of ticking or marking where the book is. If desired columns can also be made for author and title entries. An assistant at the shelves calls the numbers of the books to the assistant at the shelf register, who ticks off each number as called. After the books on the shelves have been checked, the drawers or trays where the pockets of the books out for binding, etc., are kept must be searched, and these again must be checked by the Binding Book, Withdrawals Book, and books out for repairs, etc., as before mentioned.

In libraries where close classification is in use it will be necessary to have a different form of register. This may either be on cards arranged in the order that the books are on the shelves, or on sheets as described in Brown's Manual, pp. 270-1. A single sheet is used for each class division or sub-division. The sheet is headed with the class letter and division number, and the books in the section are entered in author-alphabetical order to begin with; afterwards just as the books are added. It has columns for the accession number, author, brief title, and number of volumes, and several narrow columns for ticking purposes. As an alternative to adding the books in direct accession order, space may be left between each set of authors' names beginning with the same letter so as to assure their being nearer in order than if entered as added. If thought desirable only a column for the accession number can be used; any information as to the title, etc., being obtained from the Stock Book. In this case the accession number would be called, instead of the author and title. In indicator libraries where the accession number is used for charging purposes the assistant at the shelves would, of course, call that number to the assistant at the indicator.

In the event of the library being open during stock-taking each class or division should be checked separately. For example, in the Lending Departments of the New York State Libraries the classes are checked as follows:—January—Travel; February—Biography; March—History; April—Adult Fiction; May—Juvenile Fiction; June—Literature, and so on. After checking each class, the shelves of all the other classes are carefully gone over in case the missing volumes might be out of place. The search is continued until a final report is made at the end of each month. This report is sent to the Chief of the Department, and to it is added the total number of volumes, previously reported missing, recovered during the month. Each branch has an Inventory Book in which is kept a record of all missing volumes, and in which are entered the date of loss, book

number, accession number, author, title and date recovered or replaced. The time occupied in taking the inventory varies with the size of the class, but it must always be done within the prescribed month.

A system similar to this may be used in an indicator library. Under this circumstance, if the library is not closely classified, or if the accession number is used for charging purposes, it is not necessary to use the shelf lists, unless calling from the shelves would be inconvenient to the borrowers. In a small library the period taken to check completely each class would be about a week, or perhaps a fortnight, when stock-taking should be carried out during the summer months. Even in a large library it is advisable that the divisions containing the more popular literature—i.e., Fiction, Juvenile, Science, Arts, History, Biography, and Travel—should be checked during the slackest season—from April to September. Having checked the books, all books out for replacement or binding must be so marked on the indicator, shelf register, etc. For the latter the signs used should be the capital letter of the word represented; repairs and replacement being distinguished by a small "r" and capital "R" respectively. When every means of tracing a book fails, it should be entered in an Inventory or Lost Book, giving particulars similar to those used at New York. On the completion of the checking the shelves should be carefully gone over to find out any books for binding, re-numbering, etc. At this time also a strict watch should be kept among the scientific works for out-of-date editions which should be withdrawn for replacement.

As far as the Reference Library is concerned, this department is not generally looked upon as requiring stock-taking, as, unless Open Access is in force, the books are only issued on forms and are not allowed to be taken away. There is certainly less necessity for stock-taking here, but there is always the danger of books being misplaced, so that a periodical checking, less frequent than in the Lending Department, is advisable.

Discussion.

Mr. Kirby thought it quite unnecessary to close for stock-taking, as if all books issued during the time the work was in progress were placed aside when returned they could then be examined. Many borrowers—especially students—were inconvenienced by the closing, even although it might be during the summer months.

Mr. Gates was also of opinion that it was not desirable to close.

Mr. Yates supported this view.

Mr. Bayley on the other hand thought the work of stock-taking could best be done by closing the library for a short time. He considered the fines charged by some libraries for the non-return of books excessive.

The discussion was continued by Messrs. Harris, Bursill and Sayers, the trend of their remarks being that the custom of closing was an old one and one that must inevitably give way to more modern ideas.

The senior paper for the evening was then read. It was as follows:—

WEEDING OUT.

By J. G. FARADAY, Sub-Librarian, Hornsey Public Libraries.

The literature dealing with the difficult and delicate problem of weeding out is scarce indeed, and yet to the librarian desirous of developing the public institution entrusted to his care to the highest state of efficiency and utility there cannot be a more important subject. Why so? Simply because the value of a public library as an educational institution does not depend upon the number of its volumes, but upon their usefulness as a means of general culture and education. Therefore to keep a muni-

cipal library in a thoroughly efficient state it is not enough to provide it with a certain number of latest editions; beyond that, the old and useless books must be discarded. This theory has been readily accepted but tardily acted upon, with the result that librarians have been reproached with being book collectors, whose only object is to get together as large a number of books as possible without sufficient regard to their utility. The charge may or may not be just; but the fact remains that the problem of weeding out has not been given that practical consideration which its importance demands. Hitherto, the famous dictum of Pliny the Elder, that there is "no book so bad but what some good may be got out of it," appears to have been blindly accepted as the guiding principle in this important branch of public library policy. The truth of Pliny's dictum is not to be disputed, but the advisability of applying it in the case of municipal libraries is open to obvious objections. There are two very important objections to such a course, namely: That the work of collecting and preserving all the available printed matter, great and small, good and bad, is being so well carried out by the great national and special libraries that it is quite unnecessary, even were it possible for municipal libraries to compete with them in this particular sphere of operation; and, that the municipal libraries are not intended for purposes of research and scholarship, but to afford an opportunity for the average citizen to improve his education. This contrast between the functions of special and municipal libraries cannot be too often repeated or too strongly emphasized, as it is largely owing to the confusion of ideas on this subject that so little has been done to put the theory of weeding out to a thorough test. So on the one hand there are the great national and special libraries for the purposes of the advancement of learning and scientific research, and on the other hand there are the municipal libraries for the promotion of general culture and education. If then the main use of the municipal library is as an educational institution, and it has to deal with the average citizen, is it reasonable to retain in it a large number of books which will only be required at long intervals by the specialist, or by one individual in a thousand? Decidedly not, because the minority should not be catered for at the expense of the majority, and the preservation of books which may at one time have been of general interest and use, but which are no longer so, necessarily entails an expenditure of an amount which is urgently needed for the purchase of newer and more useful works—works that appeal to the majority of the frequenters of a municipal library. The expense incurred by the preservation of such books is much greater than it appears to be at first sight. In the first place not only has the cost of cataloguing and keeping them in repair to be taken into consideration, but also the time and labour involved in the execution of those duties. Then again the cost of charging is no small matter, particularly in the case of libraries where an indicator is used, as this instrument often has to be extended owing to its charging capacity becoming exhausted by the accumulation of a greater number of volumes than its dimensions permit to be recorded. Thus it will be seen that for the sake of economy alone all practically useless books should be discarded at the earliest possible opportunity; but apart from the question of economy there are many other reasons in favour of this course. Perhaps the most serious of these is the fact that what have been aptly termed "time dishonoured" volumes are misleading, the presence of which in a municipal library gives it an out-of-date appearance, and is calculated to seriously retard its mission and to damage gravely its reputation as an educational institution. On this account alone more than one municipal library has been condemned as nothing better than an institution for the purpose of circulating fiction. What is more, if weeding out be not occasionally undertaken the number of obsolete volumes will ultimately increase to such an extent that they will practically bury the good and useful books, besides requiring for their

accommodation a greater amount of shelf space than can be afforded by most municipal libraries.

In these introductory remarks an attempt has been made not only to prove the absolute necessity of weeding out, but also that such a course is a means of economy not to be despised. The question now arises on what lines should weeding out be conducted.

First of all it must be distinctly understood that no rigid rules can be laid down which will be found applicable in all cases, as the principles of weeding out are largely governed by local circumstances. For instance, in metropolitan libraries there need be no hesitation in discarding certain volumes which in provincial libraries would require a greater amount of consideration, because the metropolitan libraries have the British Museum, the Guildhall, and such like institutions to supplement them as it were, whereas the provincial libraries are in most cases isolated. Under these circumstances it has been thought advisable to consider those principles which apply more particularly to weeding out in libraries in or near the metropolis.

The majority of libraries contain two, and three, and perhaps even more copies of books which have been acquired to meet an exceptional demand. This demand however in the course of time sinks to normal, and one copy of each work will be found sufficient for ordinary purposes. In such cases the extra copies can very well be dispensed with. Where there are branch libraries and copies of such books are purchased for each library, it is often advisable to discard them all but one copy which can be kept in one or another of the libraries as circumstances dictate. Then there are those books referred to in an earlier part of this paper, the contents of which are no longer of any interest to the majority of the borrowers, and which are only likely to be required at long intervals. These also may be discarded without the slightest hesitation, as copies of works of this class can always be consulted at one or the other of the larger libraries. Donations which are stocked and catalogued from motives of policy generally include a large number of such volumes, and it is as well to withdraw them at the earliest opportunity, that is, as soon as it is in any degree certain that the donor will not notice their absence from shelf and catalogue. Committees and librarians, and strange to say even their assistants are not infallible book selectors, consequently books are sometimes—very rarely of course—purchased under a misapprehension of their contents, scope or practical value. These mistaken selections should be quietly discarded as soon as decency permits. With regard to the treatment of works of purely momentary interest on such topics of the day as the Russo-Japanese War, the Free-Trade Movement, and the great Boer War, the majority of them may be discarded when the public interest has declined. Take the great Boer War as a case in point. Thousands of volumes, many of them of the most ephemeral character, were published on this subject, and a large selection of them had to be purchased by the public library authorities to meet the great demand which existed four or five years ago. Yet to-day most of them lie idle on the shelves, and with the exception of one or two volumes containing good and reliable illustrations, and the "Times" and Conan Doyle's histories, they are of no further interest or use to the majority of readers. With the exception of pure literature and standard works by original authorities, books in all classes of literature may be considered obsolete, and may be freely discarded as such, when they have been efficiently superseded by new editions or better works. This particularly applies to scientific and technical works. Magazines and periodicals of all descriptions constitute another large class of literature which may be treated in the most drastic manner. They occupy an enormous amount of space, cost a great deal for the binding and repairing, and are seldom consulted. Further, the

best articles which have appeared in them have usually been collected and published in a separate form. Taking all things into consideration, magazines are hardly worth preserving in municipal libraries.

Such in brief are the general principles which librarians have for their guidance in weeding out. With respect to the details of this subject, Mr. J. D. Brown has dealt with them very exhaustively in his "Manual of Library Economy," and as it would be difficult to improve on his suggestions, those who desire more detailed information cannot do better than consult that work.

Before proceeding to consider when to weed out, perhaps it would not be out of place to offer a few cautions as to works which should not be discarded under any circumstances:—

No book, however old, should be discarded before it has been efficiently superseded. To save confusion it might be as well to explain that this means that an old book, say on chemistry, should be retained if a newer and better work has not yet been published—it should not be retained merely because the library does not contain a more modern work on the subject.

Books, maps, etc., of local interest should never be discarded.

Be careful not to discard works which have found a place in literature or those which are by original authorities.

Books of all classes containing good and reliable illustrations should always be retained.

It is hardly necessary to add that books of bibliographical interest should never be discarded.

When a doubt arises as to the advisability of discarding a volume, the wiser course is always to retain it.

What are the most suitable times to select for the purposes of weeding out is the next question to be considered. It is not at all necessary that the operation of weeding out should be undertaken periodically, for in the ordinary course of events there are constantly arising many favourable opportunities of judiciously discarding undesirable volumes. For instance, one of the most excellent occasions for this purpose is afforded when a new edition of the catalogue is being prepared. Then again when the stock is being taken a few bad cases may be removed with advantage. The preparation of books for binding affords yet another admirable opportunity of considering the claims of books to remain in the library, more particularly in the case of magazines and works on the topics of the day which no longer receive much attention. Here the best test will be, are the books worth the expense of binding, or, can the money be better expended on the purchase of new books. When the question of replacing worn-out books comes up for consideration, the opportunity should be taken to discard the extra copies of those works which are no longer in great demand.

Now as to the disposal of discarded books. Leaves from discarded duplicate copies of books are always useful for perfecting, when necessary, those copies which remain in the library, and for this reason discarded duplicates should never be disposed of if there be a convenient place in which to store them. Undoubtedly the best method of disposing of discarded books which are in a dirty condition, such as worn-out novels, and those which are of little value, such as obsolete scientific text books, is to put them on the furnace. A few of the discarded volumes will sometimes prove acceptable to the inmates of hospitals, workhouses, and similar institutions. Then again there are certain books the disposal of which had better not be discussed here, beyond saying that they are usually relegated to the librarian's office. One word of warning, do not sell the discarded books to waste-paper merchants or to second-hand booksellers of the lower class, as there is a likelihood of them being returned to the

library by officious but well-meaning people who discover them offered for sale on the bookstalls in Farringdon Street and such like places.

This paper is a brief one, but if it has shown that a municipal library, frequently and systematically weeded out on the lines suggested, will greatly increase in efficiency and utility, its end has been attained.

Discussion.

Mr. Rees in opening the discussion said he had hoped that Mr. Faraday would have dwelt more upon the *preventive* side of the question. It was the duty of librarians to do what they could to prevent the harvesting of useless books. It sometimes happened when a library was established in some particular town that there already existed in that town a 'Mechanics' or other Institute, the authorities of which would offer their collections, but such offers should be accepted with caution. Donations were another fruitful source of worthless books. Then there were the books by local authors which always found their way to the library, but why should our libraries be filled with rubbish even if the authors were local people? Technical books, such as those on electric light, must be up to date; unless they were so it would be better not to have any books of this class. It was necessary to institute some practical system of weeding out, and a librarian should always be looking out for the latest books.

Mr. Bursill thought the practice of replacing out of date books merely because they were entered in the catalogue was a wrong one.

Mr. Thorne admitted that one must look at the practical side of the question, but he was somewhat averse to weeding out. All old books had a sentimental interest for him, and he was loth to throw them away. He would like to know how to get over the difficulty of utilising the number of a discarded book in the stock book and also in the indicator, especially if more than one book bearing a particular number had been discarded. A borrower might be constantly looking for a book which had been withdrawn, or, on the other hand, if another book were substituted the borrower would get the wrong book.

Mr. Harris said that the difficulties of weeding out were so great that the work should be left to the superior officer. A library which was properly classified more readily lent itself to systematic weeding out.

Mr. Sayers said that in any consideration of the question of weeding out a distinction must be made between London and provincial libraries. In London they had the British Museum, but in the provinces the libraries were widely separated. He was a strenuous advocate of weeding out, but it required not only a knowledge of every subject but the relation of one book to another. Weeding out was also a question of book selection.

Mr. Hatcher thought it was desirable to accept all donations even although they were useless, as by declining them they might offend people who at some time might have something valuable to offer. He had sometimes found when buying new editions that with the exception of the title-page and date the book was precisely the same as previous editions.

Mr. Stephen would add his quota of thanks to the reader of the paper. It had been suggested that juniors might assist in the discarding of out of date and other useless books. He thought the sort of weeding out that would most appeal to them was that some of the senior assistants should be weeded out.

Votes of thanks were accorded to the readers of the papers on the proposition of Mr. Coutts, seconded by Mr. Hatcher, and to Mr. Johnston on the proposition of Mr. Bursill, seconded by Mr. Thorne.

Mr. Johnston in responding remarked on the pleasure with which he had listened to the papers. He did not think the discussion could have been equalled even by the Library Association.

ANNUAL DINNER.

The Annual Dinner of the Library Assistants' Association has come to be regarded as one of the most enjoyable social functions of the year in the library world, and the Dinner held at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, E.C., on Wednesday, November 29th, will further enhance this view. On this occasion between 70 and 80 members and friends met together, under the presidency of Mr. H. D. Roberts, who was accompanied by Mrs. Roberts, and among the many distinguished visitors present were Messrs. G. K. Fortescue, C. Welch, E. Wyndham Hulme, J. D. Brown, L. Stanley Jast, H. Bond, Alderman Eve, G. Preece, W. W. Fortune, H. T. Soper and F. M. Roberts, while letters of regret for non-attendance were read from Dr. Macnamara, Messrs. H. Tedder, Sidney Webb, H. J. Mackinder, and T. Greenwood. An innovation this year was the invitation extended to ladies to be present, and so gratifying was the response that it will doubtless become a permanent feature.

After the loyal toasts had been duly honoured, Mr. Bursill rose to propose the toast "Our provincial colleagues," and in doing so said he would like to include all colonial colleagues. He would also couple with the toast the name of Sir Edmund Verney, who he was sorry was unable to be present.

Mr. Sayers in responding said that assistants in London imagined that they were the library world, but he thought there were in the provinces assistants who were quite as enthusiastic. London assistants, moreover, were apt to be pessimistic, while provincial assistants were confirmed optimists.

Mr. Soper, on being called upon, said he missed the reunions they had in London when he was an assistant, as in the provinces they had no opportunity of meeting together. London assistants should do everything they possibly could to help forward the work of the Association. On the question of affiliation he would ask them to consider the matter very carefully before coming to a decision. The L.A.A. had done much good in rousing the Library Association to a sense of its duty, and the Library Association had now recognised that it had a duty towards library assistants.

Mr. Roebuck then proposed "The Library Association." It was not his province, he said, to criticise the standing and dignity of the Library Association; on such an occasion they were best employed in a consideration of the importance of the Association from the assistant's point of view. From such a standpoint the Library Association was to be regarded with much respect and thankfulness. Assistants loved to dwell upon the words of Edward Edwards, who, speaking of librarianship, said "Every man who enters on this calling may give a powerful impulse to its elevation." One step towards this elevation of the calling was taken in the establishment of the Library Association. The next was in the establishment of a code of instruction and examination organised by the Library Association, and the pioneer efforts of Mr. Roberts in this direction would ever be remembered. Later strides towards the desired end had been made in the acquisition of a Charter, and in the institution of a diploma which was to be the assistant's winning post. But even now the Association was just beginning its work. The Library Association and the L.A.A. would yet be closer, but whether by amalgamation, affiliation or by separate concerted action remained to be seen. The aims of the L.A.A. tended to supplement the work of the Library Association, and he thought in a measure which the latter could never hope to accomplish. Therefore whatever end awaited measures at present under consideration, of this the Library Association could be sure, that the L.A.A. as a body of younger men recognised, realised and appreciated the work it had done. He coupled with the toast the name of Mr. Fortescue.

Mr. Fortescue replied. The Library Association and the Library

Assistants' Association, he said, were both bonds to draw the members of the profession together. Before they existed every librarian and every assistant was a sort of unit. Every profession must have a centre, and the two Associations he had named were the centre of the library profession. As such they deserved cordial support.

Mr. L. Stanley Jast next submitted the toast of "The Library Assistants' Association." In the course of a facetious speech he said this was pre-eminently a day of societies, and it was right and proper that library assistants should have their own society and their own organ. If the formation of the Library Assistants' Association was not received by librarians with the enthusiasm it might have been, assistants at any rate had the satisfaction of knowing that what they had accomplished had been the result of their own efforts. It was interesting to contemplate what new things awaited assistants as the librarians of the future, but whatever duties devolved upon them he was certain that they would be equal to them. They had energy and enthusiasm, and these were bound to carry them far. The Association was to be envied in having a journal too small to contain the lucubrations of its members, but he would ask them to seriously reconsider their position with regard to the journal.

Mr. Thorne acknowledged the toast. He briefly sketched the progress made by the L.A.A. since its inception, and said that much of the success already attained was due to the help received from many influential librarians and others, and to the efforts of those who had worked for the Association during its infancy. Referring to the question of affiliation, Mr. Thorne said that in so far as it tended to consolidate the profession it was to be desired, but there must be give and take, inasmuch as by becoming affiliated the L.A.A. would be strengthening the hands of the Library Association.

Mr. Harris proposed the toast "Our Visitors," and observed that it was especially pleasing to see so many prominent librarians present. This was another sign of the interest and genuine regard they had for the rising generation of librarians.

Mr. Alderman Eve (Stoke Newington) responded. Meetings of librarians, he said, always had great interest for him. He regarded the Library Assistants' Association as a most excellent institution, but until recently he had no idea that the membership was so large, or that its influence was so wide.

Mr. Rees then submitted "The Chairman," and spoke in eulogistic terms of the very high esteem in which Mr. Roberts was held by library assistants. He had, said Mr. Rees, encouraged them in every way and had always shown his interest in the work of their Association. Assistants owed much to him for his splendid work as Hon. Secretary of the Education Committee of the Library Association.

Mr. Roberts, on rising to respond, was most enthusiastically received. He commented on the pleasure it gave him to be present and to be accompanied by Mrs. Roberts, who had always taken a great interest in their Association. He considered it an honour to have been asked to preside over such a gathering. He was reminded that it was ten years since the formation of the Association, and he well recollected that the first meeting of the Association held at a public library took place at St. Saviour's, of which he was then librarian. It was also a pleasure to him to remember that he was the first public librarian to read a paper to the new Association. It was a matter of congratulation that these annual dinners had been continued, and he thought he was right in saying that the attendance that night was greater than at any previous dinner. This was an evidence of the activity of the Association. Reference had been made to his work as Honorary Secretary of the Education Committee of the Library Association, and he was pleased to think that his labours in this direction had been satisfactory to his colleagues and

the library profession generally. It had been a great pleasure to him so far as he was concerned, and he would only say that he would be glad to continue his labours as long as possible. Speaking in connection with the work of the Education Committee, Mr. Roberts said he was pleased that the Assistants' Association had taken the Education Classes so seriously. The diploma of the Association was now accessible to all assistants, and he was glad to think that many of those who were present possessed at least some of the certificates of the Association, and were on their way to obtain the diploma. He would like to remind them that the diploma could only be obtained after a service of three years in a library approved by the Council of the Library Association which restricted its possession to persons already engaged in library work, although there is no such restriction as to certificates. He hoped very soon the time would come when promotions and appointments to superior positions would only be given to those possessing either the certificates or the diploma. He knew of several libraries where in the future this would be the rule. In conclusion Mr. Roberts expressed his regret that although there had been a great demand up and down the country for correspondence classes, the figures for the second series were not so great as might have been anticipated. He hoped that there would be no such ground for complaint in future years.

The toast of "The Artistes" was submitted by Mr. Coutts, and the health of Mr. Bursill, who had been largely responsible for the admirable arrangements, was proposed by the Chairman.

Space forbids our doing justice to the very excellent musical programme which had been arranged. Suffice it to say that all the artistes were in first-rate form, and that the various items were received with the utmost cordianity. Songs were contributed by Miss Amy Rees, Miss Edith Upton, Miss Theresa Woolmington, The Blackbird Quartette, Messrs. C. J. Courtney, A. Cogswell, H. L. Hucks and W. J. Vellenoweth; pianoforte solos by Miss Lily Moslin; recitations by Messrs. W. J. Harris and C. F. Newcombe; and violin solos by Mr. A. M. Moslin. The arduous duties of accompanist were fulfilled by Mr. Douglas H. Young in a very able manner.

THE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Committee was held at the Bishopsgate Institute, E.C., on Wednesday, December 20th, when there were present Mr. W. Geo. Chambers (in the Chair) and Messrs. Bullen, Bursill, Dallimore, Faraday, Harris, S. Hatcher, Hogg, McDouall, Poulter, Smith, Stephen, Sureties, Thorne, Koebuck (Hon. Sec.), and the co-opted junior members, Messrs. A. Hatcher and Loney.

Only formal business was dealt with.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Annual Dinner held on November 29th was a great success. Never before perhaps has the Association been honoured by the presence of so many distinguished members of the profession, while it was a great pleasure to see so many old friends. We wish it were possible to make this function a sort of annual reunion for "old boys," but we are afraid the "old boys" are too widely scattered. Nevertheless there are many who might find it possible, with a little effort, to attend.

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We sincerely hope that assistants everywhere will ponder over the remarks of Mr. H. D. Roberts at the Dinner with reference to the diploma. They deserve most serious attention. The diploma will before long be a most important if not absolutely indispensable qualification, and assistants should not rest content until they possess it. The first step, of course, is the acquisition of the certificates.

Our South African colleagues may derive some pleasure from a knowledge of the fact that they were not forgotten at the Dinner, and that they were most enthusiastically "toasted." It was a happy idea to couple them with "Our provincial colleagues" and those assembled showed their appreciation.

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We are penning these lines on the eve of a new year, and we take this opportunity of conveying to our confrères abroad the heartiest wishes of all assistants in the old country for a happy new year.

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We are glad to note the continued prosperity of the Northumberland and Durham Association of Library Assistants. A most successful meeting was held at the North Shields Public Library on December 13th, when three papers were read and discussed, viz.: "Lending and Reference Libraries," by Mr. R. W. Wright (Newcastle-upon-Tyne); "Libraries and Literature," by Miss M. Pringle (Newcastle-upon-Tyne); and "Library Reports," by Mr. W. Brown (Sunderland). At the same meeting Mr. W. Wilson (Gateshead) was elected president for the ensuing year, the retiring president, Mr. A. Errington (South Shields) not seeing his way to continue in that capacity. Happily Mr. Errington's services were retained as vice-president.

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At Kimberley Mrs. Margaret McGregor has given a site and some £10,000 for the erection of a Museum which is to be handed over to the Library Committee and Town Council to administer. Mr. B. L. Dyer has been appointed Secretary.

APPOINTMENTS.

BURTON, Mr. G. H., Librarian, Oldbury, to be Librarian, King's Norton.
 *CROOK, Mr. B., Assistant, Chorley, to be Assistant, Leyton.
 FAIRHURST, Mr. A., Assistant, Earl Crawford's Library, to be Librarian, Society of Accountants, Edinburgh.
 GUNNEE, Mr., Assistant, Hull, to be a District Librarian, Glasgow.
 *MACLEOD, Mr. R. D., Assistant, Greenock, to be a District Librarian, Glasgow.
 McGUFFY, Mr., of the firm of Messrs. Douglas and Foulis, Edinburgh, to be a District Librarian, Glasgow.
 RAE, Mr. W. S. C., Librarian, Darwen, to be Borough Librarian, Fulham.
 STRAIN, Mr. A., Assistant, Belfast, to be a District Librarian, Glasgow.

* Members of the L.A.A.

NEW MEMBERS.

Senior: Mr. F. T. HARMAN, Nunhead; Mr. H. HOLKER, Eccles.

ADDRESSES.

Chairman and Hon. Treasurer—Mr. W. Geo. Chambers, Public Library, Plumstead (Telephone—45 Woolwich).
 Hon. Secretary—Mr. Geo. E. Roebuck, St. George's Library, 236, Cable Street, E.
 Hon. Secretary, Education Sub-Committee—Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers, Public Library, Croydon (Telephone—394 Croydon).
 Hon. Librarian—Mr. A. H. Carter, Public Library, St. Martin's Lane, W.C.
 Hon. Editor—Mr. Hugh Smith, Bishopsgate Institute, E.C., to whom matter for the February number should be sent not later than January 22nd.